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LETTER DATED 14 FEBRUARY 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MAURITANIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to inform you that since our request submitted on 23 January 1991 in the framework of that made by the States members of the Arab Maghreb Union for an official, public meeting of the Security Council to consider the grave situation in the Arabian Gulf did not meet with a positive response from the Council, we should like to transmit to you the text of the statement that we would have made had the Council agreed to the holding of such a public meeting.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this statement circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohamedou OULD MOHAMED MAHMOUD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

[Original: Arabic and French]

Mr. President,

I wish first of all to address to you my warm congratulations on the occasion of your accession to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February 1991.

My delegation is convinced that the seriousness and credibility of your country, Zimbabwe, and your personal qualities offer a guarantee that under your presidency the Council has every chance of attaining major objectives.

We compliment your predecessor, Ambassador Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya, the Permanent Representative of Zaire, on the wisdom with which he has conducted the work of the Council over the past month.

Mr. President, distinguished members of the Council,

Notwithstanding the statements by previous speakers, and notwithstanding all that has been written about the new Gulf crisis since its outbreak on 2 August 1990, a great deal remains to be said and written about this tragedy, and above all about what has not been done in recent months to avoid it and to preserve peace. Nevertheless, in view of the seriousness of the present time, marked as we all know by the launching during the night of 16-17 January by a number of Member States of a war against the Iraqi people, and by the general eclipse of diplomacy since that date, a seriousness which leaves no room for speeches, my statement will be brief, all the more so, Mr. President, in that my country endorses the statement by the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, who has spoken in this debate on behalf of the member States of the Arab Maghreb Union.

Mr. President,

Despite the fact that the harmful impacts of the embargo on the economy and life of the Mauritanian people are various and substantial, and that the losses resulting from the Gulf crisis come at a time when my country is being subjected to an extremely unjust media campaign, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has since the beginning of these painful events taken a position of sacrifice and of support for a peaceful settlement in conformity with the principles and rules of the organizations to which it belongs. It is in this spirit that it has, inter alia, advocated a negotiated Arab solution to this conflict, free from all outside interference, and likewise has rejected the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq and is implementing the provisions of Security Council resolution 661 (1990).

As soon as the conflict entered a particularly dangerous phase Mauritania expressed, through the spokesman for its Government, disapproval of the course of events, and called for a halt to hostilities with a view to the installation of a climate which could lead to the solution by peaceful means of all the region's problems. In a second appeal for a halt to the war, addressed to you on 31 January 1990, our Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that the military

operations had turned into an enterprise designed to break Iraq's human and material foundations. Summarizing the consequences of that enterprise of mass destruction, he emphasized that the slaughter of civilian populations was, to say the least, contrary to the principles of democracy, the international rule of law and respect for human rights.

Mr. President,

Iraq, a sovereign State and a member of our Organization, has for a month now been subjected to unceasing attacks by the coalition's air, sea and land forces. The military operations we are witnessing go, it is universally agreed, far beyond the objectives of the United Nations resolutions. They are apparently aimed at eliminating both Iraq's military capabilities and the human and economic potential of an entire people.

In any event, it cannot but be pointed out that the scope of these operations is unprecedented, as is the slaughter which, moreover, is contrary to all human principles and, naturally, to those of the United Nations Charter, and to the teachings of the Bible and the Koran, in particular. The deluge of bombs falling on the Iraqi people, whose capital has at times been pounded every two minutes, is simply unimaginable. The allied air forces are said to have flown more than 71,000 sorties in a single month. It is said that 40,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Iraq over a 48-hour period. On 17 January 1991, Baghdad is said to have received the equivalent of one Hiroshima, and since then an onslaught of this intensity has taken place against Iraq every day, in an unceasing bombardment. In our day and age, this is anachronistic and inadmissible.

The refusal of any Arab solution to the Gulf crisis and the rejection of a number of plans for peaceful settlement, followed by electronic military intervention against a developing country, give rise to serious concern for the nature of the post-Cold-War order, and equally for the future of the United Nations.

In this context, it is indeed regrettable to note that the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of procedure of the Council have been in abeyance since the outbreak of hostilities, despite a number of requests for an urgent meeting, made on 23, 24, 25 and 28 January by a group of Member States at a time when world peace and security are under serious threat. And who, today, given that this destructive war and this breach of the rules are taking place, is not surprised at the silence on the part of the international community? Do not these hostilities risk reviving, on the eve of the third millennium, the nightmares and frustrations built up in the course of previous wars?

Many new questions are arising and remaining unanswered, especially following the blind destruction which has spared neither holy places, nor historic monuments, nor archaelogical sites, nor even shelters for the civilian population. The bombing of the shelter in the Amiriyah district of Baghdad, which claimed hundreds of victims, is a revolting crime which will unfortunately give rise to feelings of hatred and revenge.

I am thinking at this moment of the charter of another institution which declares that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

We are convinced that not all opportunities of avoiding the war were exhausted, and we now hope that the resurgence of the United Nations, whose passive attitude since the outbreak of the war gives rise to many questions and much concern, will afford an opportunity for restricting the conflict to the limits set by the Council and overcoming the crisis in order to halt the tragedy to which a continuation of the confrontation would give rise.

Needless to recall, force has never been an appropriate, still less a civilized, means of settling disputes, and dialogue and diplomacy are the only means of resolving conflicts.

The Maghreb initiative follows this same logic. Its aim is to enable the Council to replace the military operations by diplomatic efforts and to prevent mankind from being engulfed in a devastating and reckless war.

It is certain, Mr. President, that the vital interests of all States without exception and the ethics of the United Nations, which is the conscience of mankind and its essential forum, seeking to advance mutual understanding among States and to promote justice and peace, both call for the cessation of hostilities and for a a return while there is still time to a climate conducive to dialogue and negotiations, which would be an honourable and responsible guarantee, in particular, of the future of the United Nations. Any other attitude would undoubtedly lead to a gloomy outcome for an era said to be one of progress, would do succeeding generations an injustice and would deserve to be condemned by history.

In any event, it would be highly regrettable and dangerous not to safeguard the future of multinational relations by refraining from any action that might accentuate the differences between North and South or lead to further humiliation for the Arab Muslim world.

In this connection, it would be a mistake to continue to disregard the civilization, the history, the faith and the sacred values of peaceful peoples for whom honour and dignity outweigh everything else.

Mr. President,

In this exceptionally serious situation, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, which rejected the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq and is an honourable and law-abiding country for which any war dishonours the human race, fully associates itself with all the appeals being made throughout the world for the Security Council to assume its full responsibilities and bring about the cessation of the armed conflict with a view to giving political solutions a chance. It considers that in the interests of the maintenance of international peace and security, everything must be done to effect an immediate halt to the hostilities initiated against Iraq on 16 January.

We call for the speediest possible end to be put to this horror, which has dramatic consequences on all levels and for all countries.

Mr. President,

In these difficult days when valuable gains are everywhere threatened, it is highly appropriate that the Council should, before the conflict becomes unmanageable, make new efforts for a settlement of the crisis by peaceful means, and take effective measures to prevent a deterioration of the situation in the Middle East region, as well as in the rest of the world, where the atmosphere is everywhere tense.

It is important, at this crucial juncture when peace is threatened on all sides, that the United Nations, which is responsible for universal security, should play its role and work earnestly and without respite on those functions which are of the greatest importance to all peoples, those which distinguish and do honour to the Charter of the United Nations, namely the maintenance of international peace and security.

With respect to the search for a political solution to the central problem, namely the Israeli-Arab conflict, and for ways of safeguarding the détente which emerged at the beginning of 1990, the Council has an obligation to take effective measures to put an end to the mass immigration of Soviet Jews into Palestine and to promote the earliest possible convening of the peace conference which the international community has for so many years so earnestly desired.

Thank you for your attention.